

The following article, written by Steven Lee Myers, appeared in the New York Times on December 12, 2010 at [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/13/world/middleeast/13iraq.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/13/world/middleeast/13iraq.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all)

QOSH, Iraq — A new wave of Iraqi Christians has fled to northern Iraq or abroad amid a campaign of violence against them and growing fear that the country's security forces are unable or, more ominously, unwilling to protect them.

The flight — involving thousands of residents from Baghdad and Mosul, in particular — followed an Oct. 31 siege at a church in Baghdad that killed 51 worshipers and 2 priests and a subsequent series of bombings and assassinations singling out Christians. This new exodus, which is not the first, highlights the continuing displacement of Iraqis despite improved security over all and the near-resolution of the political impasse that gripped the country after elections in March. . . .

. . . The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, appointed by the president and Congress, said that the nominal protections for religious minorities in Iraq — including Christians, Yazidis and Sabeian Mandeans, followers of St. John the Baptist — did little to stop violence or official discrimination in employment, housing and other matters. It noted that few of the attacks against minority groups were ever properly investigated or prosecuted, “creating a climate of impunity.”

“The violence, forced displacement, discrimination, marginalization and neglect suffered by members of these groups threaten these ancient communities’ very existence in Iraq,” the commission said in its latest annual report in May.

USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission. USCIRF Commissioners are appointed by the President and the leadership of both political parties in the Senate and the House of Representatives. USCIRF's principal responsibilities are to review the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom internationally and to make policy

recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and Congress.

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